

Dear Colleagues:

I just returned from a productive trip to Norfolk, Virginia. I spoke for the Navy Exchange Service Command's (NEXCOM) Diversity Day. I was impressed by their theme of oneness and couldn't help but think about our vision statement: *We will unite and deliver innovative, life transforming service throughout and beyond the Sea Services.*

That Diversity Day theme amplifies how important unity is to our success. "We will unite," declares our vision. Our ministry provides an opportunity to model cooperation without compromise. We can be models of pluralistic outreach, demonstrating to our civilian counterparts the oneness that can happen among God's people.

After speaking at NEXCOM, I attended a retirement luncheon for RP1 Wilson at Oceana. I was reminded of the significant contributions of the Religious Program Specialists as I interacted with them. They are often the eyes and ears of the command religious program. People will often confide in them before speaking to a chaplain or another officer. I spoke to RPs gathered there, expressing gratitude for what they do so faithfully.

I enjoyed that visit and then spent some time at Little Creek. I'm elated at the many chaplains and RPs who have embraced this vision. One chaplain commented that it was nice to have a vision statement that was easy to remember. Several chaplains talked about how they are aligning their command religious programs with the vision. They correctly understand that the vision simply provides a template and a springboard from which creative ministry can occur in the various areas. It is not intended to constrain but to liberate ministry.

God is blessing our efforts. Already we are well ahead of our proactive public relations objective, having received more than four favorable major media pieces since 18 August, with more to follow. Chaplain Iasiello is aboard and making his presence felt in a wonderful and substantive way. Ministry on the green side is already flourishing under his leadership. Chaplain Bigger will be spending several months in DC, adding his expertise to our many efforts. As I leave today for the PDTC Validation in Pensacola, I can't help but think of the truth of Romans 8:28: *"In everything God is working for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose."*

Finally, the response to our Day of Prayer has been overwhelmingly positive. Some have even suggested that we do it again. In response to these suggestions, I invite you to again pray fervently for our Corps on Tuesday, 26 September. Of course, we pray every day, but this will be a special time of intercession. The God who has begun a good work is more than able to complete it. Please pass this correspondence on to those who are working with you.

Fraternally yours,

BARRY C. BLACK